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ABSTRACT

Despite the New Jersey Public School Education Act of 1975, Jersey City remains one of the poorest municipalities in New Jersey in terms of per capita property wealth, and this is having a negative effect on its educational system. Even though the new law increased State aid to public education, conditions in Jersey City have worsened. Educational spending has fallen below the State average, taxes have skyrocketed above the State average, and pupil achievement levels are among the lowest in the State. The school system, despite being overburdened with large numbers of special needs pupils, will probably continue to be a low spending, high need system. Educational spending will continue to be limited by the demands that funding of essential municipal services make on the city's limited tax base. Pupil performance may get worse rather than better. In order to rectify this situation, the school finance provisions in the Public School Education Act of 1975 will have to be replaced by a more equitable and adequate formula to provide the Jersey City educational system with sufficient fiscal resources. In addition, key participants will have to put aside "politics" and focus their efforts on meeting the needs of Jersey City's public school pupils if educational reform is to become a reality. (Author/EB)

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A Report of the New Jersey Education Reform Project

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EDUCATION IN JERSEY CITY: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF ROBINSON V. CAHILL

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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The data used in this profile was gathered from a number of sources, principally NJEA publications, New Jersey Department of Education Publications and computer tapes, and NJERP computer printouts. Revisions made by original sources subsequent to the publication of the data used and school finance calculations arrived at through another method may differ, if only slightly, from the figures quoted in this profile. However, any disparities between the data in this profile and subsequent revisions are not sufficient to alter the interpretations or conclusions stated in this report.

INTRODUCTION

In February, 1970, a young Jersey City attorney named Harold Ruvoldt filed a lawsuit in the Superior Court of Hudson County that attacked New Jersey's school finance structure. The landmark suit was titled Robinson v. Cahill. In January, 1972, the lower court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and declared the New Jersey system of financing public education was unconstitutional. A little over one year later, in April, 1973, the New Jersey Supreme Court upheld the lower court's decision and ordered the Legislature to develop a new system of financing public education.

The response of the Legislature was the drafting and passage of the Wiley-Burstein education bill, The Public School Education Act of 1975. In January, 1976, the New Jersey Supreme Court reviewed the Law and ruled that its provisions appeared to be constitutional. In July, 1976, after considerable pressure from the Court, the Legislature passed an income tax to fund the new education law.

Under the new Law, state aid to public education increased dramatically: an additional 400 million dollars was earmarked for public education by the State. Some observers believed that the fiscal plight of Jersey City and similar communities would be solved by the new school finance system, but others predicted the new formula would not provide any substantive relief for Jersey City or any of the other hard pressed urban districts.

Nearly a decade has passed since Ruvoldt filed the original Robinson v. Cahill suit. Conditions in Jersey City have worsened, rather than improved, since the new Law was enacted. Educational spending has fallen below the State average, taxes have skyrocketed above the State average, and pupil achievement levels are among the lowest in the State.

The purpose of this report is to examine Jersey City's educational and fiscal characteristics and the impact of the Public School Education Act of 1975 (the Thorough and Efficient Law) on that City.

BACKGROUND

Jersey City has a rich and colorful history. Originally known as Paulus Hook, the area was settled in the 1630's by members of the Dutch Reformed Church. English settlers followed the Dutch into Paulus Hook. Hudson County was the site of a number of skirmishes during the War of Independence and one of the most notable was the recapture of the Fort at Paulus Hook from the British in 1779 by the redoubtable "Light Horse" Harry Lee.

Paulus Hook was incorporated and renamed Jersey City in 1820. The City prospered as a seaport and industrial center up to the point in our recent history when the older urban-industrial centers began to decline.

Jersey City's history in the 20th century was marred by a tradition of political corruption that began with the election of Mayor Frank Hague in 1917. Hague built the impressive Jersey City Medical Center during the Great Depression, it was said that "he and his cronies got a $1 for every brick", but later turned it into a patronage machine for the Democratic organization. Two former Mayors were sent to prison for extortion and conspiracy in the early 1970's, as political reform began in the City.

A January 1974 New York Times article contained the statement, "Until recently, Jersey City's political situation thwarted development - financial institutions were reluctant to invest in Jersey City and become subject to the almost inevitable shakedowns". The political situation has changed for the better and Jersey City is no longer synonomous with corruption. Now there are different

problems: the type that afflict all old, property poor, urban centers.

Jersey City is located on a peninsula between the Hackensack River and the City of Newark to the West and the Hudson River and New York City to the East. Two historic landmarks, Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty lie in Jersey City waters and as a consequence Jersey City is also known as "Liberty City". Jersey City's land area covers 19.2 square miles and has an 11 mile long waterfront.

Jersey City is the second largest municipality in New Jersey. In 1970, Jersey City had 260,350 residents and according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census the City's population had declined 5.7% since 1960. A more recent estimate by the U.S. Bureau of the Census has fixed the population of the City at 239,000, indicating a decline of 8.2% in the number of residents since 1970.

Blacks and Other races comprised 22% of Jersey City's total population and 60% of all students enrolled in the public schools in 1970. In 1977, Blacks and other minorities accounted for 76% of all students enrolled in the public schools (Table 1). Jersey City has been a predominantly minority public school district for some time, and one of the reasons for this is the existence of a large network of parochial schools. In 1978, there were 33 public elementary schools, 27 private elementary schools, 5 public high schools, and 10 private high schools in Jersey City. In 1970, 32% of Jersey City's school age children attended parochial schools. In 1978, 34% of Jersey City's school age children attended parochial schools.

Some observers contend the existence of a dual public/private system of schools has hampered the development of public education in Jersey City. Voters with children in private schools often do not give public education sufficient priority: their interests tend to lie elsewhere. It is also alleged that a majority of the members of the Jersey City Board of Education send their children to private schools and spokesmen for reform groups in the City seize upon this fact

as evidence of an "official" lack of commitment to public education. It is estimated that a sizeable number of minority students attend parochial schools in Jersey City. The Diocese does not collect student data by race but crude estimates were projected for four of the six Catholic high schools in Jersey City. The estimated minority enrollments were: Hudson Catholic, 30%; St. Aloysius, 15%; St. Mary's, 66%; and St. Peters Prep, 19%. The findings of a February, 1979 survey published by the National Office for Black Catholics stated that Blacks represent a "significant percentage" of the parochial school enrollment in Dioceses where the Black population is 60% or more. The flight from urban schools is obviously not limited to White families. Jersey City is no exception, since it appears that a sizeable number of minority parents prefer parochial to public education.

Jersey City is a low to moderate income community. The New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry has estimated that between 1969 and 1975 the median family income for the State increased 26.16% to $16,432. If family income in Jersey City increased by the same percentage over the same period, Jersey City's median family income in 1975 was $11,739; more than 28% below the State median.

Unemployment is a serious problem in Jersey City. The City's average unemployment rate for 1978 was 9.9%. The 1978 average for the State was 7.2%. The unemployment rates in Jersey City for January and February of the current year were 10.3% and 11.1% respectively, 2.8% above the State average both months. In 1970, the Jersey City labor force numbered 110,043. If the size of the labor force has remained relatively stable over the last decade, an estimated 12,214 Jersey City residents were unemployed in February, 1979.

Jersey City is ranked in district factor group A, the lowest socio-economic classification in the State. The New Jersey Department of Education has developed the district factor score as a statistical measure of a district's socio-economic level. Districts were also classified into ten primary district factor groups

(socio-economic levels) ranging from low socio-economic districts in group A to high socio-economic districts in group J. The major variables used to calculate the district factor score are: (1) educational background, (2) occupational bacground, (3) per capita income, (4) poverty level, and (5) unemployment rate.

Jersey City has been involved in a vigorous economic development effort for a number of years. Downtown area brownstones have been rehabilitated, a mixed Italian/Spanish neighborhood, the Village, is attempting an ambitious revitalization program, and City officials are working hard to lure new business and industry into the area.

Jersey City has been selected as the official site of a wholesale food distribution center that will serve Northeastern New Jersey. A national chain is building a department store along Route 440 and work is in progress on an industrial park near Montgomery Street. An economic development commission is being formed to work with the Tri-State Regional Waterfront Commission in a joint effort to develop land along Jersey City's waterfront. If New Jersey voters approve Jai Alai, the City will be one of three designated sites.

There are two improtant reasons why urban officials stress economic development. First, new commerce and industry may result in the creation of new jobs that can be filled by the resident labor force. The second reason, and perhaps the most important, is that cities desperately need ratables to generate property tax revenues.

THE TAX BASE

Jersey City has the highest total net valuation (total property wealth) in Hudson County: the equalized value of the City's taxable property is over 1.2 billion dollars. However, when the net valuation is divided by the number of public school pupils in the district to obtain an indicator of the amount of

revenue generating property behind each student, it becomes clear that the City is fiscally weak. Jersey City has the second lowest equalized valuation per pupil in Hudson County and ranks among the most property poor districts in the State (Table 2).

Residents of property poor communities have to tax themselves at a much higher rate than residents of wealthy communities in order to generate the same amount of revenue. With a 1% tax rate ($1.00 per $100 equalized assessed valuation), Secaucus could raise almost six times the revenue per pupil as Jersey City. If Jersey City decided to raise per pupil revenue equal to Secaucus', the $1.00 tax rate would have to be increased by 474% ($5.74 per $100 equalized assessed valuation).

Calculation

	Equalized Valuation Per Pupil	x	Tax Rate (%)	=	Tax Revenue
Secaucus	$205,183	x	.0100	=	$2,051.83
Jersey City	$ 35,774	x	.0100	=	$ 357.74

$$\frac{\text{Per Pupil Revenue Needed}}{\text{Equalized Valuation Pupil}} = \text{New Tax Rate;} \quad \frac{\$\ 2,051.83}{\$35,774} = .0574\ (5.7\%)$$

Economic development has had a high priority in Jersey City and there has been some progress and numerous successes, however, these gains have not had any significant impact on the City's tax base.

Approximately 34% of Jersey City's property is tax exempt. The estimated value of tax exempt properties for 1978 was over 411 million dollars. It would ease the City's fiscal plight somewhat if the exempt properties were taxable, but even if this were the case, the new equalized valuation per pupil for the district

would still fall below the 1977-78 State average (Table 2).

One major problem in older urban centers is that property values increase at a much slower rate than in non-urban areas. Between 1976-77 and 1977-78, the State average equalized valuation per pupil increased 9.06%, nearly seven times as much as the 1.34% increase in property wealth for the same period in Jersey City (Table 3). In dollars, average property wealth in the State grew over 13 times more than in Jersey City. As a result, the City's per pupil property wealth slipped from 50.7% below the State average to 54.2%. Jersey City's fiscal capacity is shrinking in relation to the rest of the State. If this trend continues, and nothing short of an economic miracle can reverse it, Jersey City may be destined to experience a serious financial crisis in the not too distant future.

THE TAX RATE

While Jersey City's tax base has been decreasing in relation to the State average, the tax rate has been increasing in relation to the State average. The tax rate in Jersey City as in other major urban centers, has consistently been higher than the average tax rate for the State. In 1974, the total tax rate for Jersey City was $5.36 per $100 equalized assessed valuation, 63.41% above the State average, $3.28. Four years later, in 1978, the $6.07 Jersey City tax rate had skyrocketed to 111.50% above the $2.87 average for the State (Table 4). Jersey City has the highest tax rate in Hudson County and one of the highest of any municipality in the State (Table 5).

Jersey City has the second highest total tax rate of the seven major urban centers with the largest school enrollments (Table 6). While all of the major urban centers tax at above the State average, Jersey City levies a tax that is also above average for the seven major urban centers.

In most urban districts, municipal taxes consume a greater proportion of the total tax levy than school taxes. The reverse of this is true for the State in general. The average district in the State allocated 55% the 1978 total tax rate to education (school tax), while the major urban centers on average allocated only 34% of the total tax rate to education.

MUNICIPAL OVERBURDEN

Jersey City is an overburdened municipality, i.e., the higher costs of providing essential non-educational public services strain the City's fiscal capacity. The combination of a low tax base and a high tax rate is generally an indicator that municipal overburden exists and Jersey City qualifies on both measures. In a 1976 study, "Municipal Overburden in New Jersey: An Assessment", Reschovsky and Knickman examined 62 New Jersey communities in relation to the cost of providing essential or required services. The per capita cost for required services in Jersey City was $322. In North Bergen, another Hudson County community, the per capita cost was $139.

When municipal overburden exists in a community, the public school system generally suffers the most. Fiscally hard pressed municipalities generally allocate less of their resources to education: essential non-educational services are usually given a higher priority. The need to provide extensive non-educational public services limits the amount of local revenues available for financing the public schools, so overburdened communities tend to spend less than the State average on education.

Jersey City will probably become even more overburdened in the future. The City depends on Federal and State urban aid to underwrite a substantial portion of its municipal budget. In 1978, nearly 32% of the City's budget consisted of Federal

and State funds. This form of aid dependency, which is common among major urban centers, literally has the City "behind the eight ball". Reducations in Federal or State urban aid, such as the recent cutbacks in Federal anti-recession aid, have a catastrophic impact on aid dependent cities: some municipal services are invariably cut and the competition among the various public services for limited tax revenues becomes more intense. Municipal allocations for public education are usually a prime target when budgets must be reduced.

Neither the New Jersey Legislature nor the U.S. Congress appear to be staunch urban advocates. Both bodies are dominated by non-urban legislators for whom the concept of municipal overburden may be difficult to accept, so it is not likely that urban problems and urban aid programs will be given a high priority at some point in the immediate future.

EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURES IN JERSEY CITY

In 1974-75, Jersey City spent $1336 per pupil. At that time the City was spending 3.08% ($40) above the State average. Three years later in 1977-78, Jersey City was spending $1741 per pupil, 8.71% ($167) below the State average (Table 7). During the same period the gap between per pupil spending in Jersey City and the Hudson County average also increased. In 1974-75, Jersey City was spending 1.76% ($24) below the County average, but by 1977-78, the gap had increased and per pupil spending in the City had slipped to 4.92% ($90) below the County average. Jersey City is steadily losing ground in relation to other school districts in the State: the gap in spending levels has increased rather than decreased as a result of the school finance provisions of the Public School Education Act of 1975.

Jersey City is one of the lowest spending districts in Hudson County (Table 8). The low level of spending is related to the fact that Jersey City is one of the

poorest districts in the State and the second poorest in Hudson County (Table 2).

Increases in educational expenditures must be totally financed by the local district in the first year, and thereafter only a portion of the increases up to the state support limit will be equalized and reimbursed through state aid to education. Therefore, the local contribution is the key to educational spending under the present school finance system. Jersey City would be required to substantially increase its municipal contribution to the public schools in order to raise the City's level of per pupil spending.

Jersey City's municipal contribution to education has decreased since 1974 despite the fact that property taxes and property values have increased. Between 1974 and 1977, the City's contribution to current expense education budget dropped from $25,148,015 to $18,955,569, a reduction of almost 25%. In 1978, the municipal government increased its contribution to the schools to $21,207,908, a figure that was an improvement over the previous year, but still 16% below the amount the City had allocated to the public schools four years earlier in 1974 (Table 9).

The school finance provisions of the Public School Education Act of 1975 did not contain a maintenance of effort provision that required municipalities to contribute the same amount of local funds to the education budget that they had allocated the previous school year. The result was that nearly all of the municipalities in the State lowered their municipal contributions to the public schools, opting for some measure of tax relief instead of choosing to increase educational spending to the maximum possible level (Goertz, 1978, 1979).

Actually, a maintenance of effort provision would not have made a significant difference in Jersey City's level of per pupil spending. The school system would have had an additional $5,000,000 to spend during the 1976-77 and 1977-78 school years if the City had maintained its local share at the 1974 dollar level. The extra funds would have added $100 to the City's 1977-78 per pupil expenditure,

but the new spending level would still have been 3.5% below the state average. Jersey City would have lost ground in relation to the rest of the State in spite of a maintenance of effort provision. The City could have maintained its 1974 position in relation to the State average per pupil expenditure, but this would have required an increase in the already burdensome tax rate.

Another factor that has a pronounced effect on the adequacy of a district's expenditure level is the amount of educational need that exists among the pupils a district must serve. Jersey City is also educationally overburdened, i.e., a high proportion of pupils in the district have special needs and are eligible for state mandated special needs programs. Approximately 89% of the 34,706 pupils enrolled in the public schools in September, 1978 were classified as eligible special needs students (Table 10). Students who require special education, bilingual education, and compensatory education services are more difficult and more costly to educate than students who do not require special services. Only a portion of the costs a district incurs in operating mandated special needs programs are reimbursed by state aid, so the low per pupil expenditure level takes on an added significance. Jersey City is a low spending district by normal standards and cannot effectively educate its predominantly special needs student population on such a low per pupil expenditure. It is unreasonable to expect that a district with below average resources can cope with the problems of educating a substantial number of students with above average needs.

Lack of money is not the only reason there are problems in the Jersey City system, but it is a major cause of the district's difficulties. The City's educational problems can not be resolved by simply increasing its fiscal resources, but if fiscal resources are not increased, as a necessary first step, the City will never be able to resolve its educational problems.

Jersey City receives a sizeable allocation of Federal aid to education under the Title I program, enough in fact to add around $200 per student to educational expenditures. Jersey City also receives state aid for various special needs categorical programs that adds an additional $300 per student to the school system's expenditure level. When this special categorical Federal and State aid is included in the calculation of per pupil expenditures, Jersey City's level of spending appears quite respectable in comparison to spending in an average school district in the State. But Jersey City is overburdened with special needs students and is not an average school district with average educational problems. The purpose of Federal and State categorical aid is to underwrite a portion, and only a portion, of the additional cost of educating special needs students; to supplement rather than replace expenditures related to the regular school program. Including special categorical aid in per pupil expenditures and using the gross figures to make inter district comparisons distorts the real picture and creates a situation where unequals (districts with different levels of educational need) are treated equally (examined on the basis of gross expenditure figures).

STATE AID

In 1978-79, Jersey City was eligible for approximately 44 million dollars in total current expense budget aid to education. Over three fourths of the 1978-79 aid, $33,809,788, was current expense equalization aid allocated by the State to compensate for the City's low tax base. Approximately 66% of the costs in the District's net current expense budget are met by the equalization aid award. Jersey City was also eligible to receive approximately $9,495,568 in categorical aid (bilingual education, compensatory education, and special education) and $800,000 in transportation aid that same year.

Between 1974-75, the last year state aid was awarded under the Bateman Plan, and 1977-78, the first year school budgets were accurately calculated under the Public School Education Act of 1975, total state aid to Jersey City increased by 53.81% to $1,086.27 per pupil (Table 11). Over the same period, however, the State average aid per pupil increased by 66.45% to $669.56. Again, Jersey City lost ground under the 1975 Act in relation to the rest of the State. In 1974-75, the state aid per pupil allocation for the City was 75.55% above the allocation for the average pupil in the State. By 1977-78, Jersey City's allocation had slipped to 62.23% above the average for the State. Instead of gaining substantial aid, which could have served to narrow the inter district spending disparities, the City regressed.

To the average observer it might appear that Jersey City's state aid allocation is quite generous, that 44 million dollars in state assistance should be sufficient. What must be considered, however, is that Jersey City is the second largest school district in the State, the 22nd poorest of over 600 districts in the State, fiscally overburdened from extensive non-educational service needs, and educationally overburdened with a disproportionate share of special needs pupils. Neither the state aid allocation nor the level of per pupil spending for Jersey City are in proportion to the District's level of educational need.

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN JERSEY CITY

Jersey City is a predominantly minority school district with a predominantly non-minority staff. In 1977-78, approximately 22% of the staff and 76% of the students were minority group members. Some critics see this ethnic imbalance as a major student/staff/community relations problem in Jersey City and in a number of other predominantly minority districts. Others are quick to point out that

even in the best of all possible worlds staff ethnicity alone does not insure a sensitivity to students' needs or a greater ability to cope with educational problems peculiar to particular ethnic groups.

Jersey City, the second largest school district in the State, had 34,706 pupils enrolled in the public schools in September, 1978. The enrollment has declined 11.53% since 1972 (Table 12), but this may not mean that there are significantly fewer school age children in the City. Some portion of the decline is the result of student transfers to parochial and other private schools. According to the U.S. Census, there were approximately 52,383 pupils enrolled in Jersey City's public and private schools in 1970. In 1978, there were 52,692 students enrolled in publi and Roman Catholic schools in the city (excluding secular private and other parochial schools). Even allowing for undercounting in the last U.S. Census, it may be that the actual decline in the City's school age population between 1970 and 1978 has been less than 5%.

A number of Jersey City's school buildings are among the oldest in the State. Over 44% (17) of the 38 operating schools are more than 60 years old and the average age of the District's buildings is 47.39 years. One elementary school, which is referred to by its staff as the most neglected school in the City, has mushrooms growing inside the building. Commissioner Burke, on a visit to this particular building a few years ago, is alleged to have remarked that he had never seen a school in such poor physical condition.

Vandalism costs are also high for the City's schools. The estimated costs for 1977-78 amounted to over $350,000, approximately $10 per enrolled student. Approximately 61% ($219,730) of the total costs were attributed to 13% (5) of the District's buildings. It may be, however, that the vandalism cost estimates are somewhat inflated. Apparently, the cost estimates are derived by enumerating

building repairs made in a particular year, so it is possible that a substantial amount of the costs attributed to "vandalism" may actually be the result of age and other causes.

In 1976-77, Jersey City spent less than the State and Hudson County average on instructional materials (Table 13). The City also trailed the State and County average in relation to the number of professional staff per 1000 pupils (Table 14). Admittedly, the data cited here is old. It is possible that when the 1977-78 and 1978-79 information is compiled the District will have improved its position on these two variables in realtion to the State and Hudson County, but it is not very likely. Again, what is most significant is that Jersey City is not an average district, it is overburdened with large numbers of special needs pupils who are most effectively educated in small classes. Staff/student ratios in Jersey City would have to be drastically increased by hiring additional staff before the relationship between the City's educational resources and educational needs achieved parity with that of the State's "average" districts.

PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

Pupil achievement is a very controversial topic in Jersey City. The District's achievement scores have consistently been among the worst in the State on every statewide basic skills test that has been administered. Jersey City parents indict the personnel in the school system for the low scores. The educators, predictably, counter-indict the family and the environment. The political figures in the City reserve public comment apparently wishing to remain as uninvolved as possible in this particular area of education. Perhaps the one thing that all sides can agree on is that the magnitude of the problem is mind boggling.

When the results of the 1976-77 Minimum Basic Skills Test were tabulated, it was found that of the 7,133 students who took the test, 46.33% failed reading and 57.13% failed math. The results of the 1977-78 Minimum Basic Skills Test, which was reputed to be less difficult than its predecessor, were even more disappointing (Table 15). The test was administered to over 8,000 students in grades 3,6,9, and 11, in April, 1978. On the reading section of the test, 50.64% of the students tested failed to achieve the minimum competency standard. The math scores were also poor, 56.32% of the students tested performed below the minimum standard.

Actually, the number of Jersey City pupils who are below the minimum standard may be higher than the test results indicate. Data compiled by the Jersey City Parents Union from Board of Education lists of students registered in the tested grades show 10,252 students enrolled in the grades tested in September, 1977, but New Jersey Department of Education printouts recorded only 8,309 students tested. Almost 19% (1943) of the students who should have been tested were not. If we assume the 892 students who dropped out of school in 1977-78 are included in the "missing" 19%, and it is very unlikely that all 892 were in the tested grades, this still leaves over 1,000 students unaccounted for (Table 16).

Pupil performance is not uniformly poor at all of the City's schools. In 8 of the 31 elementary schools, almost 75% of the third grade students tested in 1978 scored above the reading minimum standard, but on the sixth grade reading test not a single school could boast of such a high percentage of proficient students.

A large percentage of the City's public school graduates who enter New Jersey public colleges have severe academic skills deficitis. Over 500 graduates of Jersey City public high schools took the New Jersey College Basic Skills Placement Test between May and September in 1978. Almost 72% failed the reading comprehension section and over 87% failed algebra (Table 17). The performance of the 243 graduates of Jersey City's Catholic high schools who took the test was much better than

their public school counterparts: 30.4% failed the reading section and 45.3% failed algebra.

When the college basic skills test results are examined by individual schools only one public high school, Dickinson, looks better in comparison to the other four (Table 18). Dickinson's apparent success, however, is relative; its graduates may have performed better than their peers at the City's other public schools, but they too scored poorly in relation to the State average.

Despite all of the evidence to the contrary, there are a number of staunch defenders who insist Jersey City operates a "thorough and efficient" school system. They contend that the City's graduates receive adequate basic skills remediation at the college through Educational Opportunity Fund and other remedial/developmental programs. The fact that this may be educational "buck passing" in its most severe form, is not considered. Similarly, the unreasonableness of expecting ancillary college programs that are generally understaffed and underfunded to perform miracles and eliminate years of accumulated academic skills deficiencies within a short period of time is given very little, if any, thought.

The basic skills of Jersey City's students lag behind the rest of the State at every level and the future implications of this trend are ominous. The Regional Plan Association has estimated that approximately 60% of the jobs that will open in the area that includes Jersey City will be in white collar and technical classifications. Jersey City's public schools are not producing students with the capability to secure and hold white collar and technical positions. The spectre of an even larger pool of undereducated and unemployed young adults in the City is practically assured.

The large numbers of undereducated students that are being turned out of the City's schools may have an even more pronounced effect on Jersey City's long term

economic development plans. It seems logical to assume that white collar and technical firms will more than likely avoid locating in and around Jersey City given the competency levels of the majority of the City's public school students and graduates.

CONCLUSION

Jersey City which is one of the State's oldest and largest urban centers, has too many problems and too few resources. It is one of the poorest municipalities in the State in terms of per capita property wealth and there are no indications that the City's tax base will grow appreciably in the near future.

Jersey City is getting poorer while most of the other municipalities in the State are getting richer, and the recent successes of the City's ambitious economic development efforts, however laudatory, are inadequate. Jersey City's fiscal needs are so great and its capacity to generate local revenues is so limited that the City will invariably continue to depend on State and Federal aid to finance nearly one third each year's municipal expenditures.

The school system, despite being overburdened with large numbers of special needs pupils, will doubtless continue to be a low spending, high need district. Educational spending will continue to be limited by the demands that funding essential municipal services make on the City's limited tax base.

On measures of educational quality it is expected that for the immediate future the school system will fall farther behind the State average. On measures of educational need the district should continue to rank among the "neediest" in the State. Pupil performance, which is an indicator of educational quality as well as education need, may get worse rather than better. The City's bilingual and compensatory education programs, which serve 84% of the pupils in the district, have been widely criticized for their ineffectiveness.

The irony of it all is that Jersey City was where the movement for educational finance reform began nearly a decade ago. While a majority of other smaller, richer, and less problematic districts in the State have benefitted from the 1975 Act, Jersey City has not: the City actually regressed in relation to the rest of the State.

The big question is "What happens now?". If public education fails to improve, the flight to the parochial schools in the City will accelerate for those who can afford the tuition. The responsibility and power to change the educational system rest with a number of appointed and elected officials and professional educators.

The Superintendent of Schools, Jersey City Board of Education, Office of the Mayor, County Superintendent of Schools, and the Commissioner of Education through their inaction must accept the responsibility for allowing public education in Jersey City to deteriorate to the present level. Further, they must each act decisely, using the powers inherent in their positions, and attempt to stop and reverse the downward trend.

The school finance provisions in the Public School Education Act of 1975 will have to be replaced by a more equitable and adequate formula in order for the Jersey City educational system to receive sufficient fiscal resources. In addition to numerous other changes, curriculum in the schools may need to be revised, class size in general will have to be drastically reduced, those administrators and teachers on staff who can learn and grow professionally will require extensive in-service training, and new staff that are hired should be among the best qualified in the State. It should be obvious that if a large percentage of students in a district perform below the statewide minimum standard, the "regular" school program is at fault. Adding limited special programs to an ineffective school system may be nothing more than an exercise in futility.

The Commissioner of Education, as the State's educational leader, should be the first to publicly acknowledge that public education in Jersey City is as far from being thorough and efficient as is possible. Education is the State's responsibility and the Commissioner is the chief educational officer of the State. The County Superintendent of Schools, as the Commissioner's deputy, should take a

similar position as should other key officials at the local level. All parties need to be involved as a team in coordinated efforts to improve the public schools, but again, it is the Commissioner's responsibility to provide the overall leadership and direction. If the key participants can put aside "politics" in favor of "professionalism", and focus their efforts on meeting the needs of Jersey City's public school pupils, educational reform may finally become a reality.

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Table 1

1977 - 1978 RACIAL/ETHNIC ENROLLMENT IN JERSEY CITY

White	Black	Hispanic	Indian/ Pacific	Total
8,388 (23.9%)	17,246 (49.2%)	8,493 (24.2%)	908 (2.6%)	35,035

Source: New Jersey Public School Racial/Ethnic Data, 1977-1978 New Jersey Department of Education. Trenton, New Jersey. May, 1978.

Table 2

1977-1978 EQUALIZED VALUATION PER PUPIL OF HUDSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

District	Rank	Equalized Valuation Per Pupil
Secaucus	1	205,183
Kearny	2	107,952
North Bergen	3	96,507
Bayonne	4	82,528
Harrison	5	80,950
STATE AVERAGE	-	78,164
Guttenburg	6	75,506
Weehawken	7	65,354
East Newark	8	56,185
COUNTY AVERAGE	-	55,259
West New York	9	37,656
Union City	10	36,532
Jersey City	11	35,774
Hoboken	12	27,654

Source: 1978-79 State School Aid Chapter 212, P.L. 1975 State of New Jersey, Department of Education Division of Administration and Finance. EDSA16. DP No. WSA89174 12/30/77 (Computer Printouts).

Table 3

INCREASE IN EQUALIZED VALUATION PER PUPIL
1976-77 AND 1977-78, JERSEY CITY, HUDSON COUNTY AVERAGE, STATE AVERAGE

	1976-1977	1977-1978	Dollar Increase	Percent Increase
Jersey City	35,301	35,774	473	+1.34%
Hudson County Average	53,944	55,259	1,315	2.43%
State Average	71,669	78,164	6,495	+9.06%

Source: 1977-78 State School Aid Chapter 212 P.L. 1975. State of New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Administration and Finance. EDSA 15. Program No. P89174. 1/29/77/ (Computer Printouts)

1978-79 State School Aid Chapter 212 P.L. 1975. State of New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Administration and Finance. EDSA 16. DP No. WSA 89174. 12/30/77/ (Computer Printouts)

Table 4

EQUALIZED TOTAL TAX RATES, 1974 TO 1978
JERSEY CITY, HUDSON COUNTY AVERAGE, STATE AVERAGE

	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Jersey City	5.36	5.26	5.79	5.96	6.07
Hudson County Average	4.43	4.25	4.46	4.42	4.37
State Average	3.28	3.17	3.26	3.01	2.87

Source: NJEA Research. Basic Statistical Data of New Jersey School Districts. 1974 - 1978. New Jersey Education Association. Trenton, New Jersey.

Table 5

1978 EQUALIZED TOTAL TAX RATES
OF HUDSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

District	Rank	Equalized Total Tax Rate
Jersey City	1	6.07
Hoboken	2	5.61
West New York	3	5.24
Union City	4	5.08
Weehauken	5	4.65
COUNTY AVERAGE	-	4.37
Bayonne	6	4.04
North Bergen	7	3.81
East Newark	8	3.61
Guttenberg	9	3.42
STATE AVERAGE	-	2.87
Harrison	10	2.70
Secaucus	11	2.61
Kearny	12	2.54

Source: NJEA Research. Basic Statistical Data of New Jersey School Districts. Bulletin A78-2. New Jersey Education Association. Trenton, New Jersey. September, 1978.

Table 6

1978 EQUALIZED SCHOOL, MUNICIPAL, AND TOTAL TAX RATES
OF SEVEN MAJOR URBAN CENTERS IN NEW JERSEY

District	School Tax	Municipal Tax	Total Tax
East Orange	2.01	5.48	7.49
Jersey City	1.77	4.30	6.07
Trenton	1.69	3.55	5.24
Newark	1.65	3.45	5.10
Camden	1.23	3.02	4.25
Elizabeth	2.06	1.82	3.88
Paterson	1.64	2.01	3.65
STATE AVERAGE	1.56	1.31	2.87
Urban Center Average*	1.72	3.38	5.10

*NJERP Calculations.

Source: NJEA Research. Basic Statistical Data of New Jersey School Districts. Bulletin A78-2. New Jersey Education Association. Trenton, New Jersey. September, 1978.

Table 7

CURRENT EXPENDITURES PER PUPIL
1974-75 AND 1977-78*

	1974-1975	1977-1978	Percent Increase
Jersey City	1336	1741	30.31
State Average	1296	1908	47.22
Hudson County Average	1360	1831	34.63

*Current Expense Budget minus Tuition

Source: NJERP School Finance Data (printouts). New Jersey Educational Computer Network, Job 851. May 25, 1978.

TABLE 8

1977 - 1978 CURRENT EXPENDITURES PER PUPIL*
OF HUDSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

District	Rank	Current Expenditures/Pupil*
Secausus	1	2159
Weehawken	2	2115
Harrison	3	1988
STATE AVERAGE	-	1908
Union City	4	1906
Kearny	5	1857
Bayonne	6	1856
COUNTY AVERAGE	-	1831
Hoboken	7	1824
North Bergen	8	1746
Jersey City	9	1741
East Newark	10	1712
West New York	11	1684
Guttenberg	12	1389

* Current Expense Budget minus Tuition and ESEA (Title I), divided by resident enrollment.

Source: NJERP School Finance Data (printouts). New Jersey Educational Computer Network, Job 851. May 25, 1978.

Table 9

MUNICIPAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CURRENT EXPENSE BUDGET
OF THE JERSEY CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1974 TO 1979

Year	Municipal Contribution ($)
1974	25,148,015
1975	25,148,015
1976	22,148,011
1977	18,955,569
1978	21,207,908
1979	21,207,908*

* Estimated contribution

Source: Jersey City Budget Office
Jersey City, New Jersey. June, 1979.

TABLE 10

JERSEY CITY STUDENTS ELIGIBLE
FOR STATE CATEGORICAL AID PROGRAMS

School Year	Special Education	Bilingual Education	Compensatory Education
1977-1978	1,195	2,396	12,106
1978-1979	1,727.5	2,160	27,126
1979-1980	2,033.5	2,790	23,188

Source: Applications for State School Aid Under Chapter 212 P.E.A. 1975. Office of the County Superintendent, Hudson County. (Data Collected April, 1978).

TABLE 11

TOTAL STATE AID PER PUPIL, 1974-1975 AND 1977-1978

	1974-1975	1977-1978	Difference	Percent Increase
Jersey City	706.22	1086.27	+380.25	53.81
Hudson County Average	524.29	859.78	+335.49	63.99
State Average	402.27	669.56	+267.29	66.45

Source: NJEA Research. Basic Statistical Data of New Jersey School Districts. Bulletin A75-2B. New Jersey Education Association. Trenton, New Jersey. June, 1975.

NJEA Research. Basic Statistical Data of New Jersey School Districts. Bulletin A78-2. New Jersey Education Association. Trenton, New Jersey. September, 1978.

TABLE 12

CHANGES IN RESIDENT SCHOOL ENROLLMENT,
JERSEY CITY, 1972 TO 1978

School Year	Pupil Count*	Percent Change
1972	39,229	
1973	38,338	-2.27
1974	37,635	-1.83
1975	37,123.5	-1.36
1976	35,788	-3.60
1977	35,470.5	- .89
1978**	34,706	-2.16

Source: NJEA Research. Basic Statistical Data of New Jersey School Districts. 1972 - 1978. New Jersey Education Association. Trenton, New Jersey.

* Resident enrollment on September 30th of year cited.

** Office of Superintendent of Schools, Jersey City.

TABLE 13

PER PUPIL EXPENDITURES FOR INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

School Year	Jersey City	Hudson County Average	State Average	Percent Below State Average
1973-1974	22.50	27.65	43.32	47.85%
1974-1975	23.65	34.53	49.84	52.55%
1975-1976	33.77	38.99	52.94	36.21%
1976-1977	40.76	44.67	55.96	27.16%

TABLE 14

PROFESSIONAL STAFF PER 1,000 WEIGHTED PUPILS

School Year	Jersey City	Hudson County Average	State Average	Percent Below State Average
1973-1974	43.0	50.9	58.1	25.99%
1974-1975	51.5	55.5	59.7	13.74%
1975-1976	51.6	56.1	60.1	14.14%
1976-1977	53.9	58.2	60.8	11.35%

Sources: NJEA Research, Basic Statistical Data of New Jersey School Districts. 1973 to 1978. New Jersey Education Association. Trenton, New Jersey.

TABLE 15

1977 - 1978 MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS, PERCENT BELOW STATEWIDE MINIMUM STANDARD

Grade Tested	Skill Measured	Jersey City	State Average	Percent Difference
3	Reading	48.5	13.7	34.8
	Math	59.0	24.7	34.3
6	Reading	56.3	24.7	31.6
	Math	59.4	29.6	29.8
9	Reading	58.2	23.7	34.5
	Math	57.6	25.5	32.1
11	Reading	33.8	10.1	23.7
	Math	44.8	16.0	28.8

Source: New Jersey Department of Education. Educational Assessment Program. Minimum Basic Skills Tests, 1977-1978. Administered April 12-13, 1978.

TABLE 16

1977 - 1978 RACIAL/ETHNIC DROPOUT REPORT, JERSEY CITY

White	Black	Hispanic	Indian/Pacific	Total
318 (35.6%)	385 (43.2%)	182 (20.4%)	7 (0.8%)	892 -

Source: New Jersey Public School Racial/Ethnic Data, 1977-1978 New Jersey Department of Education. Trenton, New Jersey. May, 1978.

TABLE 17

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS NOT ACHIEVING MINIMUM SCORE ON THE NEW JERSEY COLLEGE BASIC SKILLS PLACEMENT TEST, PUBLIC AND PAROCHIAL HIGH SCHOOLS IN JERSEY CITY**

Skill Area	High Schools	High Schools	Average
Reading Comprehension	71.7	30.4	39.0
Elementary Algebra	87.3*	45.3*	57.0*

* Roman Catholic high schools only.
** Includes students who did not attempt test.

Source: Report to the Board of Higher Education on the Results of the New Jersey College Basic Skills Placement Testing. May 1, 1978 - September 28, 1978. Aggregated According to Sending High Schools. New Jersey Basic Skills Council. December 15, 1978

TABLE 18

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS NOT ACHIEVING MINIMUM SCORE ON THE NEW JERSEY COLLEGE BASIC SKILLS PLACEMENT TEST IN JERSEY CITY BY PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Skill Area	Evening High School	Dickinson High School	Ferris High School	Lincoln High School	Snyder High School	State Average
Reading Comprehension	66.7	48.7	84.3	84.3	78.6	39.0
Elementary Algebra	92.6	74.1	89.8	91.7	95.5	57.0

Source: Report to the Board of Higher Education on the Results of the New Jersey College Basic Skills Placement Testing. May 1, 1978 - September 28, 1978. Aggregated According to Sending High Schools. New Jersey Basic Skills Council. December 15, 1978.

TABLE 19

HUDSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS RANKED HIGH TO LOW BY THE ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS BELOW THE STANDARD MINIMUM STATEWIDE (DISTRICT PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT)

District	Rank	Estimated Percent Above Minimum Standard
Guttenberg	1	83.13
Secaucus	2	78.49
West New York	3	75.17
East Newark	4	74.23
Kearny	5	72.32
North Bergen	6	72.11
STATE AVERAGE	-	71.06
Bayonne	7	66.01
Weehawken	8	64.61
Harrison	9	63.33
Union City	10	59.20
COUNTY AVERAGE	-	58.24
Jersey City	11	48.95
Hoboken	12	38.96

Source: Calculated by NJERP from New Jersey Department of Education State Compensatory Education Printouts (District Eligibility Levels) and 1977-1978 enrollment data.

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GLOSSARY

BATEMAN PLAN:(Bateman/Tanzman Act): The former system of school financing in New Jersey that was revised in 1970, but overturned by the State Supreme Court in 1973 as unconstitutional. The Bateman Plan was replaced by the current system when the Public School Education Act of 1975 was enacted.

CATEGORICAL AID: Federal or State aid that is awarded for a specific use in a specific classification or category. Bilingual, compensatory education, special education, and transportation aid are examples of State categorical aid programs.

CURRENT EXPENDITURES: (Current Expense Budget): Education expenditures associated with the daily operation of the school program. Includes all expenditures except those for debt service and capital outlay.

EDUCATIONAL OVERBURDEN: A term applied to school districts with excessive numbers of pupils who have special needs and are harder and costlier to educate. When the percentage of special needs pupils in a district exceeds 30%, the district can be considered overburdened because fiscal and staff resources may be inadequate.

EQUALIZED VALUATION: A measure of property wealth. The value of a district's taxable real property adjusted to reflect 100% of its market value.

EQUALIZED TAX RATE: A measure of tax effort. The tax rate of a district or municipality adjusted to reflect an assessment rate of 100% of market value.

EQUALIZATION AID: State aid to education that compensates districts with low property bases. Equalization aid is calculated as a percentage of the current expense budget minus State and Federal categorical aid, tuition, surplus funds, and miscellaneous, that will be re-

- glossary -

EQUALIZATION AID: imbursed by the State. Property poor districts receive greater percentages of equalization aid, wealthier districts receive less.

PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION ACT OF 1975 (The "Thorough and Efficient Law"): The 1975 Law revised and supplemented the New Jersey Education Statutes as a response to the State Supreme Court's action that declared the Bateman Plan unconstitutional. The 1975 Law contained state aid and school finance provisions currently in force in New Jersey.

WEIGHTED PUPILS: A system that gives students a lesser or greater "weight" according to their special needs or their classification in special groups. For example, a regular student might be counted as 1.0. A student in a special category or with a special educational need would be counted as 1.8, the additional weight (0.8) accounting for the special needs. Weighting systems are generally used in calculating aid to education or determining pupil counts in relation to how difficult and costly various pupil groups are to educate.